The Creepy Legends of Korean Egg Ghosts

MIKE GRINDLE • JUL 17, 2023 7:24 PM EDT

Read on to learn about the dreaded dalgyal gwishin

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Egg ghosts, or *dalgyal gwishin*, emanate from Korean folklore and legend. They are named for their pale, ovoid appearance. But these horrifying creatures are no Humpty Dumpty characters from children's nursery rhymes. Instead, despite the silly name, the dalgyal gwishin is one of the more terrifying entities you could imagine.

Not only do egg ghosts look creepy, but the tales behind their conception are sad, haunting, and mysterious. The result is one of the most unique phantoms in all of ghostlore.

What Is an Egg Ghost?

Accounts of egg ghosts vary wildly. Sometimes, they are described as humanoid entities without facial features. Their heads are described as being opaque and egg-shaped, and they occasionally appear larger than the figures' bodies. In other tales, these ghosts more closely resemble hunchbacks.

In some stories, egg ghosts are not only faceless but lack legs, arms, or any other extremities. Instead, they look just like eggs. And they are always faceless.

Perhaps the lack of a well-defined description of an egg ghost comes down to the belief that anyone who sees an egg ghost is not long for the world.

The Dalgyal Gwishin are said to wander aimlessly through forests

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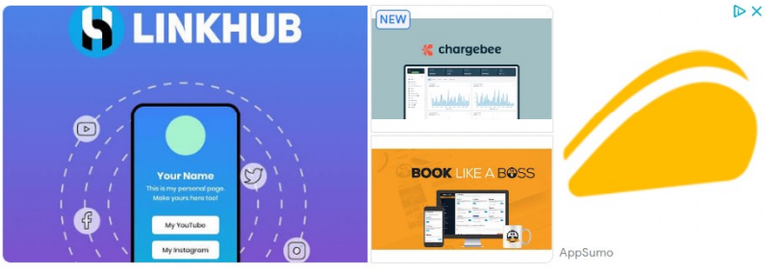
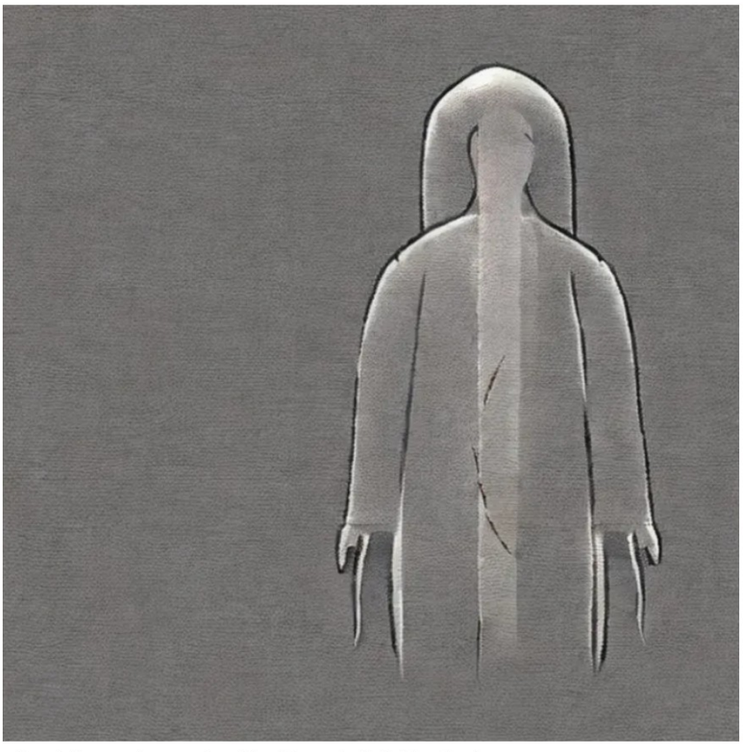
Egg Ghost Traits

Dalgyal gwishin spirits do not have much in the way of a well-defined personality or human traits. This lack of personality makes egg ghosts something of an anomaly within East Asian and Korean folklore, where most mythical beings feature human characteristics or are associated with particular people. For example, there are the devious and seductive umiho, the mournful virgin ghosts (cheonyeo gwisin), and the vengeful kuchisake-onna.

Meanwhile, Egg ghosts tend to act with little discernible motivation. They typically prowl forests restlessly, stalking any hikers who wander there. But they do not attack the hikers. Instead, they imbue them with whatever drama resulted in their existence, the devastating gravity of which kills the hikers.

Again, there are many variations on the egg ghost tale. In some stories, egg ghosts do not kill people but possess them. In other stories, they do not inhabit forests but other dark shadowy places like the alleyways of cities.





Some believe egg ghosts are the spirits of those who died without loved ones.

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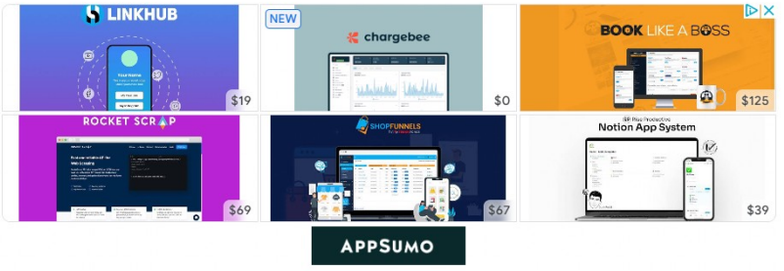
Where Do Dalgyal Gwishin Come From?

No one is quite sure how or why an egg ghost manifests. However, most believe that it is a form of a childless spirit who died without any loved ones present. This lack of friends and family results in egg ghosts lacking any features, personality, or identity.

Dalgyal gwishin spirits are commonly depicted as women, hence the childless element of the legend. The egg-shaped aspect may also have symbolic meaning, as eggs are often associated with fertility and motherhood.



Similar Spirits and Legends

The most similar ghosts in Korean folklore to egg ghosts are the cheonyeo gwisin (virgin ghosts). These are malevolent female spirits who died without marrying or bearing children. It is said that Korean towns once erected phallic symbols and statues to ward off these ghosts.

Another similar Asian entity to the egg ghost is the faceless noppera-bo of Japan. Unlike the dalgyal gwishin, these spirits are relatively harmless, preferring to scare humans rather than hurt them. They do so by imitating someone the person knows, only to shock them by revealing their horrifying appearance. Like egg ghosts, no one knows why these apparitions behave the way they do.

The faceless nature of egg ghosts, and their tendency to wander forests, bears some similarity to the western creepypasta known as Slender Man. But they feature very different backstories.

Egg ghosts share some similarities with the Slender Man creepypast

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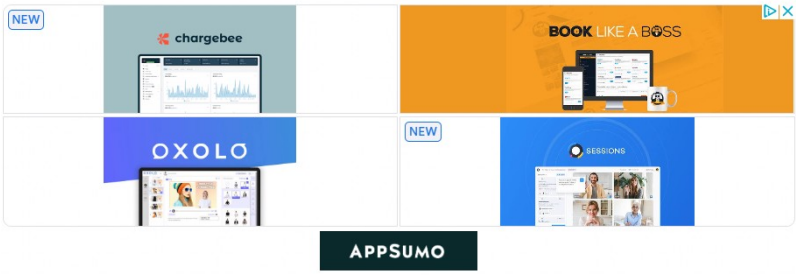

Why Egg Ghosts Are So Terrifying?

Compared to other myths and legends, egg ghosts do not have the richest folklore. But it is this very lack of understanding, reasoning, motivation, or physical characteristics which makes egg ghosts so terrifying. Incapable of communication, an egg ghost cannot be pleaded or bargained with. They cannot be tricked or understood. And by the time you become aware of one, it is already too late.

Perhaps the only thing more terrifying than an egg ghost is the thought of becoming one—to become trapped as a restless spirit stripped of all humanity, left to wander lonelily through the forests of Korea.

Sources and Further Reading

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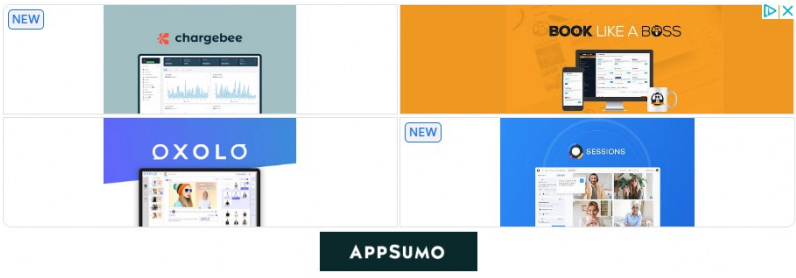

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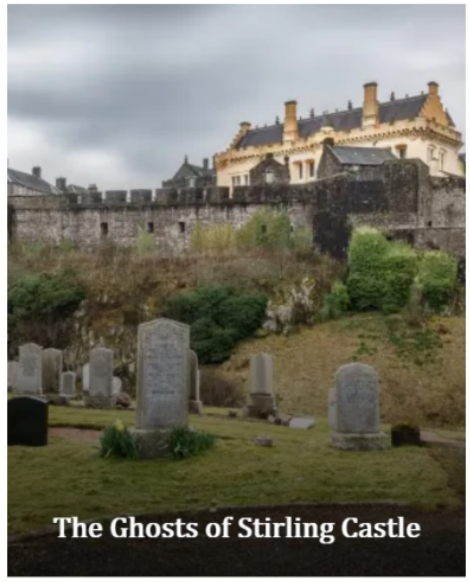

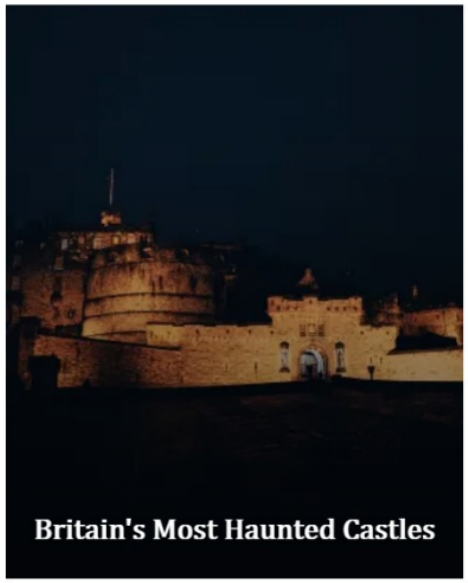

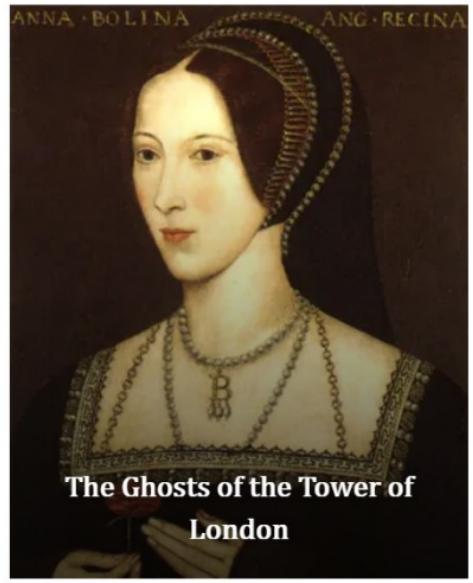

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